

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 02276 261021Z
ACTION SIL-01

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07

INR-07 LAB-04 NSAE-00 AID-05 /044 W

-----262039Z 052455 /63

R 260900Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7814

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 2276

BRUSSELS FOR USEC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, ICTFU, JA, SN, VN

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH DEVAN NAIR

REFS: A) SINGAPORE 2145, B) TOKYO 6931 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. IN WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE AND LABOFF, NTUC SECRETARY-GENERAL DEVAN NAIR SAID HE WOULD SOON BE WRITING AAFLI DIRECTOR MORRIS PALADINO ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AAFLI AND ARO. NAIR ALSO DISCUSSED RECENT VISIT OF SOHYO OFFICIALS TO SINGAPORE AND THEIR DESIRE TO ASSIST ARO. IN ADDITION, NAIR MENTIONED THAT A WFTU REPRESENTATIVE RECENTLY INFORMED NTUC THAT VIETNAMESE WERE PLANNING TO START AN ASIAN LABOR PROGRAM ON WFTU'S BEHALF. END SUMMARY.

2.. CHARGE AND LABOFF CALLED ON NTUC SECRETARY-GENERAL DEVAN NAIR UPON HIS RETURN FROM A CONFERENCE IN ROME TO DISCUSS RESULTS

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 SINGAP 02276 261021Z

OF THE RECENT ARO EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING AND THE FORTHCOMING ILO CONFERENCE (SEE SEPTEL). NAIR CONFIRMED THAT ARO EXECUTIVE BOARD HAD AUTHORIZED HIM TO EXPLORE POSSIBILITY OF COOPERATIVE LINK BETWEEN

ARO AND AAFLI (REFTELS), AND SAID HE WOULD SOON WRITE TO AAFLI DIRECTOR MORRIS PALADINO. NAIR WILL PROPOSE THAT ARO'S PROGRAMS AND EDUCATION BUREAU CONSULT WITH AAFLI TO SEE WHAT

ASSISTANCE LATTER COULD PROVIDE FOR ARO PROJECTS. NOTWITHSTANDING ICFTU SECRETARIAT'S RESERVATIONS REGARDING SUCH COOPERATION (WHICH WERE EXPRESSED IN BOARD MEETING), NAIR DID NOT THINK THAT SECRETARIAT WOULD TRY TO BLOCK AAFLI ASSISTANCE BECAUSE CONSENSUS IN ARO FAVERED SUCH A ROLE. HE NOTED, HOWEVER, THAT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO APPROVE AAFLI ASSISTANCE ON A PROJECT-BY-PROJECT BASIS. ALTHOUGH NAIRO THOUGHT AAFLI WOULD BE PLEASED WITH ARO DECISION, HE SAID HE WAS SURE THE AFL-CIO WOULD BE DISPLEASSED WITH HIM BECAUSE OF HIS CRITICISM OF LATTER'S PROTECTIONIST STANCE EXPRESSED IN PAPER HE PRESENTED TO THE ASIAN LABOR SUMMIT.

3. NAIRO EXPRESSED STRONG INTEREST IN ESTABLISHING AN ARO PROJECT IN THAILAND TO ASSIST RURAL POOR AND THAT AAFLI ASSISTANCE WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THIS PROJECT. AFTER HIS MEETINGS EARLIER THIS YEAR WITH THAI PRIME MINISTER THANIN, INTERIOR MINISTER SAMAK AND GENERAL KRIANGSAK, NAIR IS CONVINCED THAT THAIS WOULD WELCOME ARO PRESENCE. DESPITE MISGIVINGS OF SOME OF HIS WEST EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COLLEAGUES WHO OBJECT TO THAI MILITARY-BACKED REGIME, NAIRO SEES SUCH A PROJECT AS AIDING "DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT" AND BOLSTERING THAILAND AGAINST COMMUNISM. PROJECT IS STILL VERY TENTATIVE, BUT NAIR HOPES TO OBTAIN FUNDS FOR FEASIBILITY STUDY FROM ESCAP.

4. WHEN ASKED ABOUT HIS MEETING WITH SOHYO OFFICIALS FOLLOWING THE LABOR SUMMIT, NAIR SAID THEY HAD PROPOSED MAKING DIRECT CONTRIBUTIONS TO ARO'S ASIAN SOLIDARITY FUND. NAIRO RESPONDED THAT SUCH CONTRIBUTIONS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE BECAUSE SOHYO HAS WFTU AFFILIATES. HE SUGGESTED THAT CONTRIBUTIONS COULD COME FROM CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 SINGAP 02276 261021Z

SOHYO'S ICFTU AFFILIATES AS WELL AS FROM THOSE SOHYO UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS. NAIR EVEN SUGGESTED THAT SOHYO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER AFFILIATING WITH ICFTU, WHICH WOULD PERMIT DIRECT ASSISTANCE TO ARO. SOHYO REPS REPLIED THAT THIS WOULD VIOLATE THEIR POLICY OF "POSITIVE NEUTRALISM". NAIR COUNTERED THAT MANY WEST EUROPEAN UNIONS AFFILIATED WITH ICFTU HAD REGULAR -- THOUGH NOT INSTITUTIONALIZED--CONTACTS WITH SOVIET BLOC UNIONS. SOHYO OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, STILL DEMURRED AND IT APPEARDD THAT SOHYO CONSIDERED NAIR'S OTHER PROPOSAL TO BE THE MORE REALISTIC OPTION FOR ASSISTING ARO. NAIRO OBSEVED THAT HE WELCOMED AND WAS ENCOURAGED BY SOHYO INTEREST IN ARO.

5. FINALLY, NAIR VOLUNTEERED THAT WFTU SECRETARIAT REPRESENTATIVE, NAHENDRA SENG, HAD RECENTLY MET WITH NTUC OFFICIAL IN SINGAPORE. WFTU REP REPORTEDLY SAID THAT VIETNAMESE HAD PROMISED TO ORGANIZE A LABOR PROGRAM IN ASIA ON WFTU'S BEHALF. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF WHAT TYPE OF ACTIVITIES THIS WOULD ENTAIL OR WHAT COUNTRIES WERE TO BE TARGETED. NAIROWAS SCEPTICAL THAT THIS WOULD AMOUNT TO MUCH BECAUSE MOST ASIAN UNIONS WERE AFFILIATED

WITH ARO AND WOULD NOT ASSOCIATE WITH WFTU-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES.
HOWEVER, HE SAID HE WOULD WATCH CLOSELY FOR ANY DEVELOPMENTS IN
THIS AREA.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LABOR RELATIONS, PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE, LABOR UNIONS
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977SINGAP02276
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770188-1085
Format: TEL
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770514/aaaaalpr.tel
Line Count: 120
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fc613289-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SIL
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 SINGAPORE 2145, 77 TOKYO 6931
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2354340
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONVERSATION WITH DEVAN NAIR
TAGS: ELAB, JA, SN, VN, AAFLI, ICTFU, ARO, (NAIR, DEVAN), (PALADINO, MORRIS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fc613289-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009